

Widnall

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national policy makers on the Air Force's contributions to the joint team. Second, we must prioritize and manage our programs carefully. And third, we must press ahead with the movement toward better business practices that will shake loose the resources we need to sustain our combat capabilities into the future.

□ Sustain the effectiveness of our current operations and upgrade quality of life for our deployed forces. Ultimately, everything we do comes down to the capabilities that our people provide our national decision makers — the options we provide our nation and the professionalism with which we execute them. We have stepped up to a wide range of missions and a high operation tempo during the years since the end of the Cold War, and we continue to learn about these new missions as we go. We have taken a series of steps to relieve the personnel tempo load on our people, and those steps will continue.

Recently, I traveled to the Middle East and reviewed the progress of our forces there. We have performed magnificently in very austere circumstances in that theater. Our Air Force people performed miracles in the wake of the Khobar Towers bombing —relocating whole wings, upgrading force protection, all while

continuing the mission without a pause.

Now we must focus on upgrading quality of life. This will take time — but the time to work at it is now. Our commanders are focused on that need. We must help them give our people the living and working conditions they deserve.

□ Celebrate a successful 50th anniversary. We are members of the greatest air and space force in the history of the world. Every day we ensure the national security of the greatest nation on earth.

This year we will celebrate that legacy. We should all take the opportunity to enjoy the celebration. We have all earned it — we have all sacrificed to help build our unique capabilities.

As we celebrate, we must take time to educate the American people on the contributions of air power to this nation. And we should take time to reflect on the unbelievable progress of air and space power in our remarkably intense five-decade history.

So, there will be nothing ordinary about 1997. I view the coming 12 months as a huge opportunity for the Air Force. In all of these efforts, we can build on the superb achievements of Air Force people around the world. During the past five decades that record of achievement has built a solid foundation for our next steps. We will build on our golden legacy as together we construct a boundless future.

Combine

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and O'Shaughnessy say a few logistical problems still need to be worked out.

Both Page and O'Shaughnessy also agreed there probably would not be any new military or civilian job vacancies created from the consolidation.

O'Shaughnessy reflected the spirit in which the merger has been taken at Lakenheath.

"Colonel (Doug) Richardson (48th FW commander) and the senior leadership of this wing, in taking on current strategic planning efforts, are embracing this and are off and running," the chief said. "I think it will pay dividends for the wing for years to come."

He commented further on where the merger will take the Air Force.

"I'm excited," he said. "I was in the Air Force in the '70's when there was a similar, though much more bloody, drawdown after the Vietnam War. I feel this time the Air Force has got it right."

"You can certainly see the ground work that was laid with 'Quality Air Force' by General (Merrill) McPeak (retired Air Force Chief of Staff) as a way to avoid becoming the hollow force we were in the 1970's."

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